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Naval War College Review

Volume 15
Number 8 *November*

Article 2

1962

Great Britain and the United Nations

Patrick Dean

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Dean, Patrick (1962) "Great Britain and the United Nations," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 15 : No. 8 , Article 2.
Available at: https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol15/iss8/2

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

REVIEW

Issued Monthly
U.S. Naval War College
Newport, R. I.

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

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GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED NATIONS

A lecture delivered
at the Naval War College
6 April 1962

by

Sir Patrick Dean

I feel greatly honored at being invited to speak to you today, and as Admiral Austin said I am also greatly pleased, because it was about ten years ago that I was, for a period, what we call in England the senior civilian instructor at our own Imperial Defense College. I had the pleasure of meeting two or three senior members of your service who attended the courses there and I got to know them very well. I very well remember those happy days before I went out and joined other institutions like the one I now am privileged to serve.

You spoke about the close ties between your country and mine, and I agree entirely with what you said. I think that, in these days, the fact that our two countries have been so closely linked together for so long, and have now, after certain difficulties in the past, perhaps reached a very good working alliance, is a matter which really is of the most enormous importance in the world as it is today. There is so much turmoil and tension about—there are so many difficulties with which we are confronted—that it really is vital for the peace of the world that the Anglo-American working alliance between our two countries should be kept in good repair, and that the foundations upon which it rests—the community of interest, the rule of law, and all these sort of matters—should be preserved and fostered carefully by our two communities.

One of the places where we can do this best of all is in the United Nations. As you know very well, the United Nations has been having a pretty rough passage recently and there has been a good deal of talk, both inside and outside the institution, about its value and the place it ought to occupy in the foreign policies of our respective countries. There has been a sort of process of reassessmeut going on, not only here, but also at home in Great Britain. You know, of course, about the speeches which have been made recently. You have probably read about the speech my Secretary of State, Lord Home, made at Berwick-on-Tweed just after Christmas, in which he had some fairly harsh things to say, among them about the troubles in the Congo and in the Katanga. And the debates in

the British Parliament and the British Press showed there was a good deal of unease and criticism about the way in which the United Nations conducted itself, the way the money was spent, and so on.

Now, I personally think it is a very good thing that we have had this period of criticism because we really tend to criticize only those institutions which we think are worthwhile, and I think that the results of this period are now beginning to emerge. I will try in my talk to you to point out some of the bad features in the United Nations and some of the dangers. I will also try and point out some of the complicating features, and then sum up, and hope that you will then tackle me on points of detail in the question period.

The first point of criticism, or the first difficulty about the United Nations, is its cost. The expenditure there runs about at the rate of 17 million dollars a month, excluding aid financed purely by voluntary contributions, and also the programs of some of the specialized agencies which do so much of the good work, as the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization, and so on. What is more serious is that, due to the failure of a number of member governments to contribute on the scale approved by the General Assembly for the Congo and Gaza Strip operations, the organization ended last year with a deficit of over a hundred million dollars.

Now, I don't want to give you too many figures, but the truth is that, as of now, some 70 delegations there—some 70 member countries—are in more or less serious arrears with their payments in one way or another. Of course, some of these arrears are false in the sense that they depend a little bit on the budgetary procedures of given countries, and even *you,* who pay so much towards the United Nations, can at a given moment appear to be in the red when, in fact, that is very far from the truth. But leaving aside that purely extraneous factor, a large number of countries are serious debtors to the organization.

And again, the Congo operations, which alone cost 10 million dollars a month, are not being financed in any way by the Russians and their communist friends, who have refused throughout to pay anything towards this particular operation. Nor are they paying for the operations on the Israeli-Egyptian border. At the same time Belgium and France, for rather different reasons, are also refusing to pay for the Congo. Even more tiresome is the fact that these defaulting countries expect, nevertheless, to play a full part in formulating United Nations' policy, and in directing United Nations' activities, even though the way in which they are trying to push this policy and these activities is often directly opposed to the interests of countries like yours and mine, who are finding so much of

the money. And so, on that score alone, the critics of the United Nations who say that we are paying a good deal too much for an organization, the value of which is in any case diminishing, first because of the irresponsibility, as they say, of the newer members, and second owing to the Soviet wrecking tactics, have a *prima facie* case.

Now are these criticisms valid? Before I go on to examine them in detail, I will declare my own interest by saying that whatever are the faults of the United Nations, or their shortcomings, I believe, and my countrymen believe, that it is an organization which is very well worth preserving. You see, from the British point of view we look at it in this sort of way: We're a very small country highly vulnerable in this nuclear age, and we live by our trade; and thanks to our explorers and missionaries, our soldiers and sailors, we built up from 1600 onwards a vast overseas empire of which you were lucky enough for a time to be a part. But by now the greater part of this empire has left us; most of it has become independent, but not all of it, within the commonwealth, and the effect of that has been to leave us no longer a world power in the sense that we were a world power a hundred years ago, or even 50 years ago, or in the sense that you and the Russians are now, but a power with great interests and responsibilities scattered all over the world. If not a world power in the true sense now, we are above all a world-wide power, and it is to our paramount interest therefore to support an organization like the United Nations whose task it is throughout the world to uphold the rule of law, and to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes. Without those endeavors, without the rule of law and the peaceful settlement of disputes, our own position is placed continually in jeopardy.

Of course, aside from that, there are other good reasons for supporting the United Nations which not only apply to us, but to all responsible nations in the world. First of all, we have got to consider carefully what would happen if we ceased to support the organization and were to withdraw more or less from it.

Now it has been argued--for instance last October in *Foreign Affairs* Senator Fulbright wrote a forceful article on the subject--that a concert of free and like-minded nations might provide a more reliable basis for policy than the United Nations does. More recently, as you know, Senators Jackson and Mansfield have had much the same sort of thing to say in rather different terms. Now, of course, those little ideas have underlying attractions, but I do think they are also very dangerous. For one thing, if we were to abandon the United Nations, give it up or play very little part in it, would other nations follow our lead? What would happen in particular to the smaller, newer nations who are now so fully

represented there? Well, I don't think for one moment they would also abandon the organization or leave it. I think that they would remain in it, and that the Russians would also remain in it, and fill the vacuum which we would create. Nothing, in fact, would suit the Russians better than to have a free run in the United Nations, because the effect of our withdrawing our support from it would be, I think, to throw the weaker, smaller, newer nations very much into the sphere of influence of the Russians. Similarly, any step like this on your or our part, would cause great concern, unhappiness, and disagreement among the smaller Western allies. These countries, for good reasons of their own, have a greater need, and perhaps a greater faith in the United Nations than the larger and more powerful states. And any decision by the major Western powers to leave the organization, or not to support it fully, would confront our allies with a very difficult choice, indeed, and would certainly lead to a weakening of the alliance as a whole. And so, just as there are strong arguments against the United Nations in its present form, I hope you will also agree that there are strong reasons–*prima facie* arguments–for continuing to support it.

Now, can we analyze for a moment the present shortcomings, the present courses of the disquiet, and then go on and have a look at the future? The first point I would like to make is that the United Nations cannot be considered in isolation although there is a tendency to do so. If it is weak and divided that is because it reflects and sometimes distorts the political divisions in the outside world. Archbishop William Temple, who I happened to know, was a very great man; he was once asked by an inquisitive gentleman why the clergy were of such poor quality. After some thought he replied, 'Because we have only the laity to choose from.' And much the same thought applies to the United Nations. You can't expect the United Nations to be much better than the world around it. All nations, whether they are old and powerful, or new and not so powerful, must look first to their own national interests. I am not being cynical when I say that most countries in the organization, if not all, are in it for what they can get out of it. And if we are going to understand the organization and be able to support it properly we should accept that fact; we must accept the reality of national interests and try to harness them to useful ends.

Now what are these national interests? And how are they going to affect the future of the United Nations? For instance, the Soviet attitude towards the organization I think is this: the communists are already committed to the idea and the ideal of a world order based on international communism, and all non-Communist steps to build up a rival world order must be regarded by the Soviet Government and its allies, with

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suspicion and hostility. For instance, any non-Communist schemes for world government are invariably dismissed by Soviet commentators as being antidemocratic and infringing on national sovereignty. The unimportance in the Soviet eyes of the United Nations as an ideal or objective is well seen by the following: In the 390-page long official handbook of the Soviet Communist Party, which is used for political training throughout the country, there is a lengthy section on international affairs, and in that section there is no single mention whatever of the United Nations. That is not at all surprising when one looks at it through communist eyes. A strong international organization based on the idea of the United Nations would be a serious threat to the communists' own concept of the world. And so, when at the end of the war the United Nations was established by the victorious powers, the Russians really had two alternatives. They could either boycott it from the outset, or they could join it in order to use it as far as possible for their own ends and to prevent it being used in ways of which they disapproved. You know they adopted the second course and their use of the veto (99 times up to date) showed the way in which they did it. While Stalin was alive the Soviets attached very little importance, even negatively, to the United Nations. This was, no doubt, because at that time membership had very little attraction for them, and also because they were engaged in rebuilding their own country after the war. But when Stalin died, a great change came over the scene. Since then, increasingly more flexible tactics have been adopted under the slogan of peaceful coexistence and these are designed to meet the challenge posed by the new force in the world, and particularly in the United Nations—the nonaligned nations.

Now, you all know the familiar Russian steps to court and subvert the newly emerging nations of the world—the lavish state visits, the much publicized aid programs, etc. But since these new countries are eager partners in the United Nations and must be so because of their position, the Russians have in recent years concealed their basic contempt and dislike of the organization and are playing a much more active part there than they were ten years or even five years ago. In any case, participation from their point of view has now become much more rewarding because with the intake of new members there has been a great change in the voting power, and the influence of the United States, the United Kingdom, and our allies has been correspondingly reduced. In 1955 there were 16 Afro-Asian members of the United Nations. In 1958 there were 29. In 1961 there were 48, and there are several more still to come. Very soon the so-called Afro-Asian group, which really isn't a group at all, will have a simple majority in the organization. Although the Soviet group's primary interest in the United Nations is as a propaganda and political forum, it is in the political debates that it tries to make its influence felt. The United Nations

has become, from the political and propaganda point of view, a most important forum for the struggle for the allegiance of these newer countries.

What about this so-called Afro-Asian group, this Afro-Asian bloc? Many of these countries are very new. Some are very old in history and institutions. All of them, except Japan, are economically and industrially underdeveloped. Many of them have newly created political institutions, and virtually all of them are militarily weak. All, I think, really want to be nonaligned, but they are nearly all subject to considerable pressures from the power blocs of the East and West.

What is their attitude towards the United Nations? And are the critics justified in charging them with irresponsibility and recklessness? And even if they are, or appear to be, at times irresponsible, how far is that a real danger to the United Nations, and one which would justify the West, for instance, ceasing to support the organization? As I said, it is an oversimplification to talk about a bloc. The states concerned range from countries like Pakistan, Thailand, or Japan, which are allied by treaty to the West, to countries like Ghana, Guinea, or Indonesia, which lean rather more to the left. The bloc itself, so called, disclaims any intention of forming a third force. The political systems vary enormously from country to country. Of course, they have a number of economic and social problems which tend to bind them together. And the fact that they were mostly, in the recent past, colonies of one or more of the Western powers, provides a very powerful psychological bond. Also to be realistic and honest, we have to face the fact that they are racially mostly non-White, and that again, in this world where there is a great deal of racial discrimination, also provides a powerful bond inside the United Nations.

These facts are alone sufficient, I think, to explain the rather emotional way in which many of the countries approach colonial problems and their application of what my Foreign Secretary and others have called a *double standard.* The British find it rather hard to be still attacked as wicked imperialists when in the last 15 years or so they have given independence to over 620 million people, whereas the Soviet Union poses, and is often treated as a great anticolonial power, although you all know it has considerably enlarged its empire since the beginning of the war, and as far as I know has never given freedom to anybody. We, and you for that matter, resent the fact that our economic aid tends to be branded as mere imperialism, and it is disappointing to find that the right of self-determination which is so hallowed in connection with Africa or Asia is apparently regarded as inapplicable to people like Hungarians or the inhabitants of East Berlin.

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Of course, the most disturbing and revealing example of this double standard—of this irresponsibility on colonial issues—was the reaction in the Security Council last December to the Indian invasion of Goa. Now, I am well aware that India had, in her own eyes at any rate, very considerable provocation, and to very many people it seemed an anomaly that Portugal should retain this small enclave on the Indian sub-continent a number of years after Great Britain and France had voluntarily withdrawn. Nor, to be frank, is the rigidity of the Portuguese system and their stand on colonial issues very conducive to negotiations. But when all is said and done the fact remains that India, who is the most persistent advocate of nonviolence, did not use the available machinery of the United Nations to solve the problem, and did prefer to use force contrary to the letter and spirit of the Charter. The Soviet Union and the three members of the Afro-Asian group on the Security Council not only voted against the resolution calling for a cease-fire and the solution of the problem by peaceful negotiations, but actually themselves tabled a resolution which only got four votes, but which implicitly approved India's use of force on the Portuguese to terminate hostilities.

Now, of course, it is entirely in keeping that the Russians would vote for a resolution of that sort. It suited both their short-term aim of pleasing the African delegations and their long-term aim of weakening the United Nations as a whole. But what was disturbing was to find that in these circumstances the emotional feelings aroused in the Assembly by anticolonial feeling could cause so many delegations to blind themselves to the true facts of the situation. Mr. Adlai Stevenson, speaking at the end, used I think some very moving words when he said that this could be the beginning of the end. There is force, therefore, in this criticism about a double standard, but I think, if I may say so, that the argument is sometimes overdone and the picture is by no means so black as it is often painted. There have been a number of encouraging developments in the last few months, particularly the last year, to show that, in fact, the double standard is not so commonly applied as is thought.

I think the most encouraging and most interesting was the complete failure last year by the Soviet Union when they attacked the person and the position of the Secretary-General. You know what happened. The Russians came forward after Hammarskjold's death with a proposal for a troika, a three-man executive. The West was determined not to accept any such proposal, and we would have been able to block it. But what was encouraging and right was that the Afro-Asian delegations, almost to a man, recognized the Soviet maneuver for what it was—an attempt to undermine the independence and the integrity of the United Nations and of the Secretariat, and offered the firmest resistance. As a result of a long and rather bitter struggle, and with the support of all these new

delegations, or virtually all of them, we finally emerged with a good solution, an independent Acting Secretary-General, with his position and his power virtually unimpaired.

Again, on many colonial issues the newer delegations have shown a great deal, it seems to me, of moderation and good sense recently. Last November the Russians introduced into the General Assembly a violently worded resolution, calling for the immediate independence of all colonial territories unconditionally. They had to withdraw that resolution because they got no support for it at all, and it was replaced by a much milder resolution calling for the end of colonial rule within a reasonable time. Again, on Southwest Africa and Angola, both of which are subjects which naturally arouse considerable emotions, and where the Afro-Asian delegations regard themselves as being considerably provoked, resolutions have recently been passed with the support of almost all the Africans, the Asians, and the Western delegations. Most interesting of all, and it is not so obvious because it is a negative, has been the attitude of many of these delegations to the recent debates about Cuba. As you know, the Russians have been trying to stir up debates about Cuba in the committees in the Assembly itself, and in the Security Council. These debates are purely propaganda and they have been trying very hard, indeed, to persuade the Afro-Asian delegations and other neutral delegations to take part in the debates, implying in their speeches criticism of the United States. And they have been always completely unsuccessful, although they have put considerable pressure to this end on these delegations.

Well, now, I have discussed the attitudes of the Russians and the attitudes of the newer delegations. What should our own attitude be? What should we try and do about this organization? I think first that the countries of the West and their closest friends must try to reach even closer agreements on the general line of our policies than has sometimes been the case in the past. I am not suggesting that we should adopt the rigid, absurd unanimity of the communist bloc in voting or debate. The other day (some of you have probably been to the General Assembly and have seen it working; you may have noticed that punctuality is not among its virtues) a rather tired and irritated chairman of a committee tried to get his meeting started and decided to call the roll to see if a quorum was present. He started off with, 'Australia,' 'yes'; 'Austria,' 'yes'; 'Argentina,' 'yes.' The delegate of Byelorussia was just walking into the room at this moment and hearing all these wicked reactionaries saying, 'Yes,' he thundered, 'No.' And precisely because we do not believe in that form of rigidity, we are also opposed to the communist ideology. I am not suggesting for a moment that all the Western nations should always vote together. I think it is quite a good thing that we should speak and vote separately and differently on a number of issues, but I

think we could do more at times to co-ordinate our policies at any rate on the major issues.

Secondly, we must do more to uphold the Charter. It is suggested quite often that the Charter should be radically revised and that the whole structure of the organization be reformed. Now, of course, in some respects, particularly procedurewise, it is quite true that the Charter is a little out of date and that better provisions could be set up on a number of constitutional matters. But whatever its shortcomings, and these are not very serious, and they are certainly not incorrigible, the Charter of the United Nations, as my Secretary of State, Lord Home, has said, is a clear unequivocal guide to sanity, law, and order. I think we must make it clear that if this United Nations is to endure, the principles of the Charter have to be respected by all, and there can only be one standard of morality for all members of the organization.

Thirdly, we have got to do more to support the Secretary General. He is going to be under continuous pressure from the Russians and their allies. One way we can do so is by trying to lighten his burden. It is, of course, desirable and necessary that the Secretary-General should take political initiatives of his own. But there has been in the past a tendency, I think, to unload onto the Secretary-General, problems and responsibilities which we in the Free World might have done better to tackle ourselves. This brings us to the much debated question of the peace-keeping operations of the United Nations.

Now it is quite obvious that in the past the United Nations has intervened on a number of occasions with very useful results. Korea is perhaps the most outstanding example, though the circumstances were rather special. But the United Nations plays a useful part in keeping the peace on the frontier between Israel and Egypt, and we are only today debating in the Security Council this recent affray which might have been very much worse on the frontier between Israel and Syria. Again our United Nations' observers are keeping watch on the situation in Kashmir. We can remember Lebanon and Jordan and, of course above all, the Congo, where the prompt intervention by the United Nations undoubtedly kept the cold war out of Central Africa, and probably the hot war as well. But valuable as that sort of intervention is, there is considerable danger in trying to put too much weight upon the United Nations in present conditions, in trying to saddle it with tasks for which it is neither politically, militarily, nor financially equipped. And there is a tendency to talk about the need for the United Nations' presence in this or that place, without analyzing too carefully what is meant by those words. If what is meant is purely a body to conciliate or observe, then it is a task which the United Nations is admirably equipped, and it has often done it well in the past. But it is

really important, if you are not going to break the organization, to realize that it is not a world government in present circumstances and can't be so long as the world is divided in the way it is. Nor do we want to turn the United Nations into a sort of 20th century neocolonial power. So, I hope you will agree that we should not try to push on it tasks for which it has not got the political, administrative, or military strength.

Well, what of the future? As I say, we have got to be prepared for further efforts by the Russians to undermine the structure of the United Nations. They suffered a temporary setback last November when U Thant was elected Acting Secretary-General, but his appointment only lasts until April of next year. The Soviet attack both on him personally and the whole concept of an impartial Secretariat will, I think, probably begin quite soon. Meanwhile, the Russians are pressing for more equitable distribution within the Secretariat on a geographical basis, and it is quite true that purely on a geographical basis they have quite a strong case. But although the United Nations is going through this difficult period, I would like to end, if I may, by saying what my Foreign Secretary said, that having weighed the whole matter, the balance is decidedly on the side of hope. I have tried to give you some reasons for that this morning. Another reason is that the subject of colonialism, which the communists have exploited so readily and successfully on the whole in the last few years, is beginning to get less and less rewarding from their point of view. There are fewer and fewer colonies remaining to be liberated, to use that term, and as these issues tend to disappear—and I know there are still some difficult ones still to come, but they are much fewer than they were—this apparent bond of sympathy between the Russians and some of the newer delegations will tend to disappear too. But if we are going to encourage that process we have got to make it clear to the newer nations that we have no objection to neutralism as such. We respect the right of every country to choose its own foreign policy, and there is an honorable place, now as there has been in the past, for those countries who want to remain neutral and unaligned, just as there is an honorable place for countries like yours or mine who prefer to seek their security by way of alliances. Basically the interests of the newer Afro-Asian states coincide far more with the interests of your country and mine than with those of the communist bloc, and in spite of some lapses in practice their way of life is much closer to our own democratic way.

And so I conclude that although there is much we can and should do inside the organization, the future of the United Nations is going to depend in the long run on the success in the wider ideological struggle, between democracy and communism. Governor Stevenson put it very well the other day when he said, 'The United Nations as an idea and as an institution is an extension of Western ideas, of Western belief in the

worth and dignity of the individual, and of Western ideology. It is based on a Western parliamentary tradition. Its roots are in the idea of representative government; in short, it is thoroughly antitotalitarian.' I hope I have said enough today to convince you that the United Kingdom, no less than the United States, is determined to remain strong and faithful supporters of the United Nations.

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

Sir Patrick Dean

Sir Patrick Dean has been the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations since 1960. He was educated at Rugby School, Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. He was a Classical scholar, and received First Class Honors in 1928. He was a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, between 1932-35, and called to the Bar in 1934. He was a Barstow Law Scholar in 1934, practiced at the Bar between 1934-39; was Assistant Legal Advisor, Foreign Office from 1939-45; Head of the German Political Department, Foreign Office, from 1946-50; Minister at His Majesty's Embassy, Rome, from 1950-51; Senior Civilian Instructor at the Imperial Defense College, 1952-53; Assistant Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, from 1956 until his appointment as Permanent Representative to the United Nations in 1960.

Sir Patrick Dean has contributed several articles and notes to the *Law Quarterly Review*. He is a Knight Commander of St. Michael and St. George, an order conferred upon him in 1957.